FAIRY LAND.

BY LILIAN M. THOMPSON.

One morning I opened the orchard gate
And stood alone with the gray old trees,
With the robin caroling to her mate,
And the hordes of the drowsily toiling bees.

Outside I had left but the common world,
Though a beautiful world of bloom and song,
For Spring had her azure wings unfurled,
And scattered the treasures withheld so long,

But what was this palace so rich and rare,
With its strange, curved columns of varied gray?
Were they dandelions or jewels fair,
That thick on the emerald carpet lay?

What was this fragment which fluttered down
From the gorgeous dome of tinted snow?
Was it a scrap of the sunrise blown
From the rosy clouds to the earth below?

Was it the wing of some luckless spirit,
Ruthlessly severed by fairy queen?
Or an atom of living, quivering light
Caught and detained by a snow-flake sheen?

Was it a delicate pearly shell
Fashioned by elves in the ocean's gloom?
Or a talisman wrought by some magic spell?
Nay: 'twas but a petal of apple-bloom.

A DUEL WITH PILLS.

I.

Yesterday, intently gazing into a show-window on Canal street, a feeble white-haired old gentlemen recalled memories of a tragedy which in the hurly-burly of life, seems to have passed into oblivion.

In 1841, outside of the city proper, there was, perhaps, no more delightful place of resort than at the Bayou Bridge. It was *par excellence* the great suburban attraction at that time, and between boating parties on the water of the bayou and card reunions over the tables of old Barleduc's gambling saloon out there, the *jeunesse dorce* of New Orleans of that day managed quite comfortably to while away many a leisure moment. Possibly no two young gentlemen enjoyed the quiet hospitality of Barleduc more than Alphonso Riviere and Henri Delagrave; in fact, most of their afternoons were spent in the dimly lighted saloon of the old gamester, at whose shrine all the card-loving element of the city paid homage.

There was a quiet air about the place that seemed almost religious, and even the parchment faced old man, who mechanically handled the little ivory ball in roulette, called out the numbers in a repressed voice as if he feared to disturb the quiet. The faint "click" of the "chips" as eager players dallied with them, was perhaps the loudest sound to be heard there, and even that came to the ear in a subdued way. On the floor a bright covering of matting hushed the footsteps, while at the windows dark yellow curtains let in only just enough light for the illumination of the gambling tables.

Riviere was a dashing fellow of 22, with a large estate in the Parish of St. James and a round account in the old Union Bank. He had passed successfully through the Ecole Polytechnique in France, had taken about in Algeria, and returned to Louisiana as accomplished and companionable a gentleman as one could wish to chat with. He was fond of his horses, his wine, and a quiet game of cards. Refined in his manner and dignified in his deportment, he was a warm favorite, and his entry into old Barleduc's establishment was always the signal for a cordial greeting from all who might be present.

On this particular June afternoon Riviere, with the activity of a gymnast, leaped from his buggy in front of the saloon, and throwing the reins to his negro servant, told him to drive the horse into the shade of the pecan tree in the yard. Switching a delicate, ivory-headed cane with a nervous, jerky motion, he crossed the broad gallery and, unannounced, entered the gambling room. Most of the players were wrapped in attention to their game, but one there was who turned his head at the entrance of the last comer. This was Delagrave. He felt that a crisis was at hand, but even with this knowledge he did not strive to elude its coming. That morning he had been accepted as the betrothed lover of Mme. Celestin, one of the most beautiful and wealthy widows of the lower coast, and Riviere, who had been for the past year her most devoted admirer, was left to nurse his disappointment as an unsuccessful suitor. Riviere had had no hesitency in letting the world know that he wanted to marry the coquettish little widow, and, further, he, in a very plain way, gave people the information that he did not want interlopers paying their devoirs at the same shrine. These matters are hard to arrange exactly as one would wish. One finds much difficulty in closing all avenues of approach, for love is not unlike the light whichthe photographer in his dark room finds so much difficulty in keeping out. It steals in under doors, through nail holes and even down the chimney. At least such had been the case at Mme. Celestin's, for jealous and watchful of rivals as Riviere was, Delagrave had made the conquest under the very eyes of the enemy, and the widow had that day so informed the unsuccessful suitor.

Riviere was very pale as he approached the group of men around the table. What with the yellow light shining through the curtains and his bloodless appearance, de seemed rather a ghastly corpse than living body, but there was motion and voice in him, which soon dispelled such an illusion.

As he neared Delagrave, the latter turned to confront him, when Riviere, with a voice that seemed to come from behind the door of a tomb, said, "Delagrave, we cannot live on this globe together; it is not large enough."

Delagrave, quietly puffing his cigarette, in a cold and impressive tone replied: "Yes; you annoy me. It would be better if you were dead."

Riviere's face flushed, and reaching forward he laid the back of his hand gently against Delagrave's cheek. The game was at once interrupted. The slap, which was so light it did not even crimson the young man's cheek, was enough to call for blood, and leaving the house he sought an intimate friend; to him he opened his heart. It must be a battle *a outrance*. Such was the enmity between himself and Riviere, only a life could wipe it out. The old doctor, who had grown up, it might be said, on the field, shrugged his shoulders and remonstrated, but at last acquiesced and said: "Very well, then; it shall be to the death."

II.

Few people knew what sort of a party it was driving down the shell-road bordering Bayou St. John. Two carriages stopped just on the bridge leading straight to the island formed there by bifurcation of the bayou and four gentlemen alighted. Savalle, a well-known character here forty years ago, accompanied Riviere, and old Dr. Rocquet was with Delagrave. The seconds had met previously and arranged everything. Delagrave, as he stepped from the carriage, looked furtively around for the cases of pistols, but, seeing none, he was a little disconcerted. After walking about 100 yards from the carriages, the party stopped and the doctor motioned them to approach closer. When they had done so, he called them by name and said: "Gentlemen, we have discussed this matter nearly all of last night, and both M. Savalle and myself feel satisfied that there is no solution to the differences between you but the death of one. The world is so formed that both cannot live in it at the same time." The two men nodded. "Therefore," the doctor went on, "we have agreed to make the arbitrament as fair as it is possible, and let Fate decide." He took out a black morocco case and from it produced a pill-box containing four pellets. "One of these," said he, "contain a positively fatal dose of prussic acid,the other three are harmless. We have agreed that each shall swallow two of the pills, and let Destiny decide." Savalle inclined his head, and said, as the representative of Riviere, he agreed.

The two men were pale, almost bloodless, but not a nerve trembled or muscle contracted.

"Gentlemen," said the doctor, "we will toss for the first pill." Savalle called out "tail," as the glittering gold piece revolved in the air. It fell in a bunch of grass, the blades of which, being separated, showed the coin with the revered head of the Goddess of Liberty uppermost. "M. Delagrave, you have the first choice," said the doctor.

Reposing in the little box the the four little globes seemed the counterpart of each other. The closest scrutiny would not develop the slightest difference. Nature alone through the physiological alembic of the human stomach can tell of their properties. In one there rests the ball of eternity, the struggle for breath, the failing of sight, the panorama of years rushing in an instant through the mind, the silence and peace of sleep for evermore, the ceremony, the burial case, the solemn cortege and the close, noisome atmosphere of the grave. All these were contained in one of these little pellets. Delagrave having won the first choice, stepped forward and took a pill. With a calmness which was frigid he placed it on his tongue and with a cup of claret, handed him by the doctor, washed it down.

"And now, M. Riviere extended his hand and took a pill. Like his oponent he swallowed it.

The two men stood looking one another in the face. There was not a quiver to the eyelid, not a twitch to a muscle. Each was thinking of himself as well as watching his adversary. One minute passed. Two minutes passed. Three. Four. Five. "Now, gentlemen," said the doctor in solemn tones, it is time to make the final drawing."

This was the fatal choice. Both men were ready for the cast of the die. Savalle tossed the gold piece aloft, and the Doctor cried out, "Heads." "Heads" it was, and Delagrave took a pill from the box, leaving only one. "Now," said the Doctor, "the remaining one is for you. You will please swallow them together."

The two men raised their hands at the same time and deposited the pills on their tongues and took a draught of claret. One second passed, and there was no movement. Two seconds, and neither stirred. Then—"Good God!" exclaimed Riviere, his eyes starting from their sockets. He turned half around to the left, raised his hands above his head and shrieked a long wild shriek that belated travelers even to this day say they hear on the shell road, near the island.

He fell prone to the earth, and, save a nervous contraction of the muscles of the face, there was no movement.

Delagrave took him by the hand as he lay on the damp grass, and said, in a tender voice: "I regret it, but it was to be."

The funeral was one of the largest ever seen in New Orleans, and for weeks the cafes were agog with the story of the duel. The beautiful widow, horrified at the affair, would never see Delagrave afterward, and is now a happy grandmere on Bayou Lafourche, having married a wealthy planter two years after the fatal event.

Delagrave, weighed down with the trials of an unhappy life, wrinkled and tottering, strolls along Canal street of warm afternoons, assisted by a negro servant. Having a bare competency, he has never actually suffered from wants; but he shows evidence of great mental anguish. The sight of a pill-box makes him shudder, and the taste of claret will give him convulsions.—*New Orleans Times-Democrat.*

A Defenceless Nation.

At the recent gathering of the army of the Potomac, Rear Admiral Rodgers responded to the toast of the navy, when he made the following remarkable statement: "So far as I know we have not even one good gun of modern calibre ashore or afloat, in the army or in the navy. What is worse I fear we have no trained artisans nor any forges to make guns. Our old cannons are as obsolete as the flint-lock musket of 1812, and we haven't one efficient man of war." General Rosecrans, who sat next the speaker, suggested that this country depended on torpedoes. Admiral Rodgers immediately took issue with him, and said that while torpedoes were not implements of warfare to be disregarded, they were an utterly unreliable power. What amazing confidence the American people have in their latent power, that in this age of armored war vessels, gigantic cannons, and enormous armies, they can see no necessity for any defence! China to-day is better prepared for war than the United States, and one flotilla of gunboats, recently constructed on the Clyde for the Chinese Government, could without any difficulty, take possession of our entire Pacific coast line, including San Francisco. The whole navy of the United States and all its guns could not defend the city of the Golden Gate from the attacks of the Chinese men of war.—*From Demorest's Monthly.*

In Search of an Alibi.

He was a lawyer and came home from the lodge in the gray dawn of the morning and found the bosom of his family clothed, and in her right mind.

"Charlie," said she, on faintly returning a proffered kiss, "you have spent another night of carousal and dissipation."

"Why do you say that, my dear?"

"Because your breath smells horrid with whisky."

"But, my dear, don't you know you would be ruled out of court on a single point of circumstancial evidence like that? You ought to have a concatenatien of cumulative facts and illustrative circumstances that would establish your charge irrefragibly. As it is, what you allege is a mere supposition that will not hold water a minute."

Then the fires of practical logic blazed out of her black eyes, and seizing a dipper,she exclaimed: "Here is something that will hold water, I reckon," and as she plunged the argument into a boiling kettle of water, Charles struck out vigorously for the gate in quest of an alibi.—*Toledo American.*

A Poetic Widow.

Our mutual friend Spykens has "made a mash," to use the language of the worldly. He incidentally became acquainted with the Widow McWinzie at a church social last fall. She has now come to the conclusion that he is her natural affinity and wants him for her fourth husband. Her strong suit is poetry, or, as she expresses it, "human æsthetic rhyme; the sweet responsive echo of soul to soul."

"Dear Mr. Spykens," sighed the widow the other evening, puckering her mouth down to the size of a shirt button-hole, as it were, "you have lived and loved. The mellifluous profundity of your sympathetic soul has always required that you should."

"Ah, yes, Mrs. McWinzie, you bet, I——"

"Call me Hitty, dear; my name is Mehitable, and the most endeared to me always call me Hitty."

"All right, Hitty goes."

"Well, as I was about remarking, my nature was aboriginally poetic; away up among the embarrassed clouds of heaven's sublimited artillery. My first husband was a dear genial spirit, attuned to poetic harmony, but nothing could rhyme with his name. It was Tulkington. I used to weave it into poetic verse by abbreviating it to Tulky, but even then it never would make a smooth rhyme with any other word. Two short years he loved and languished, and then sank to eternal rest as softly as though the springs of his couch had been the Springs of Parnassus."

"Beautiful! beautiful!" exclaimed Spykens, "what a rattling good obituary you must have written for him!"

"Ah, me," sighed the widow, "I tried over a year to write seven verses suitable, and perhaps might have succeeded had I not been wooed and won by Jason Babcock. My new married life was bright and hopeful until I tried to merge it into poesy. The culmination came when I composed twenty-seven verses, each one rhyming his name, the best of which were mason, basin, face-on. Then he closed the doors of his heart, took his overcoat and valise, and bade me farewell forever. I never saw or heard of him more."

"What a miserable, narrow guage, unappreciative wretch he must have been."

The widow gave a responsive roll of her dark gray eyes toward the sympathetic Spykens, and she continued:

"Yes; the rythmatic music of poetry did not abound in his worldly soul, and my own longing heart almost perished before I procured a divorce on the ground of desertion. Then I married my old friend and schoolmate, Timothy McWinzie. He had a soul full of sympathy, and when he realized how my poetic soul was crushed by the very idea of making rhymes of his name, or any part of it, he earnestly, yet rashly, attempted it himself. For days and weeks he wrote, and went about the house muttering to himself binzle, crinzle, dinzle, finzle, ginzle, hinzle, and his last words as he died in the insane asylum, were minzle, pinzle, stinzle, zinzle."

"How dramatically sad," moaned Spykens, as he reflected upon the rhyming possibilities and calamities of his own name.

"Did you ever read Thaddeus of Washoe?" asked she, beaming her loving eyes, full of literary intelligence, full upon him as she gently laid her hand on his coat sleeve.

Spykens owned up that he hadn't, and tore himself away from her sweet presence, pleading pressing business engagements. The widow had money in bank, and a whole pile of stocks, and is looked upon as a desirable matrimonial investment, but when Spykens reflects, musingly, upon the sad fate of those three husbands, two killed and one driven away by her infernal poetry, assisted materially, no doubt, by her large, cold, clammy feet, he concludes to remain single.—*Virginia (Nev.) Enterprise.*

A Female Pioneer of the Press.

New Orleans Picayune.

In a tiny, cozy little cottage, in Yazoo City, lives the first real newspaper woman in this country. Wisteria vines climb over the windows and low door-ways, and magnolia trees cast graceful shadows over the wide, worn porches. The yellow Yazoo river flows peacefully past the foot of the street, and glimpses of it can be caught now and then through the trees. Here in this quiet house lives Mrs. Harriet N. Prewett, the oldest newspaper woman in this country, In 1848 Mrs. Prewett was left a widow, the most important of her possessions being three little children and a weekly newspaper, the Yahoo City *Whig*, afterwards the *Banner*.

For more than fourteen years Mrs. Prewett was editor, proprietor, news editor, agent, book-keeper and mailing clerk for her spunky little paper. She also kept house, saw that things were tidy at home, and did the sewing and patching, mending and knitting for her three children. Her editorials were strong and fearless, and exercised strong influence in Mississippi politics. Mrs. Prewett held out as long as she could against the extreme measure of secession; but when she did haul down her Union flag, she became one of the boldest, bravest defenders of the southern cause. At one time Mrs. Prewett had an editorial tilt with Mrs. Swisshelm, who was then running a paper in Massachusetts, regarding the respective merits of their babies. At another time, a Jackson, Miss., editor, intending to be sarcastic, invited the editress of the *Banner* to put on her breeches and come over to Jackson and run the legislature, she having criticized some of the acts of the members. The editress retorted that if the Jackson editor would put on his breeches and come over to Yazoo City he would be received by two little boys, one eight and the other ten years old, who would hang a leather medal about his neck as an I. O. U. for a sound whaling to be administered as soon as they were grown big enough to do it.

Mrs. Prewett's was the first paper in the country to announce the name of Millard Fillmore for the presidency. This brave, hard-working woman used to take her sewing to the office with her, and when interrupted by the proverbial fiends that haunted newspaper offices, even before the war, she would lay aside her pen and sew or knit while talking, so as not to loose any time. Finally, this grand woman's strength gave way—and she became a helpless invalid. For twenty years she has been tied hand and foot to an invalid's chair, whence, with an eye as keen and a mind as bright as it was when editress of a dashing, influential paper, she looks out on the world in which she has already accomplished her life's work. Mrs. Prewett's home reminds the visitor of the home of Paul H. Hayne. Brown honeysuckle vines frame in the little cottage. Inside, in her own room, walls and ceiling are deftly covered with the pictures cut from illustrated papers—ten years in the history of the pictorial publications of this country are traced upon its walls. Mrs. Prewett is a bright, cultivated weman, in her day she was one of the most beautiful women in the south, and was sought for her womanly graces as well as for her brilliant intellect. She is delightful, recalling great names dear to southern people, and has the political and literary history of the state and of the south fresh in her mind. She remembers her visits to the old office of the *Picayune*, years ago, and spoke of the sensation the appearance of the first daily newspaper in the south created everywhere. To-day Mrs. Prewett is a graceful writer, and occasionally dainty poems, like white-winged birds, flutter out into the newspaper world from her little home in the peaceful Yazoo valley.

The New Two-Cent Stamp.

The Postmaster General has approved the design for the new two-cent stamp, of which the following is a description: On a tablet is suspended an incised shield, decorated with headwork, oval forming a framework, surrounding a copy of Houdin's life-cast of Washington. At the base of the oval is the figure "2," and below the shield is the word "two" on the left, and the word "cent" on the right. Surrounding the upper part of the oval appear the words "United States Postage." The color of the stamp is metallio red. It is a handsome piece of workmanship, and displays decided artistic taste, the shading being particularly delicate and finished.

—One of the results of the meeting of superintendents of the Pacific, Texas and Wells & Fargo Express companies, at St. Louis, a week ago, at which C. T. Campbell represented the Texas and Wells Fargo companies, and L. A. Fuller and James Aiken the Pacific Express Company, was to fix on rates from New Orleans to all points in Texas where these companies have offices. The agreed rates are being published for the guidance of the local agents at points affected. The St. Louis meeting was to confer on the wild cutting between the companies named and to come to some remedial understanding. It was agreed to resume charges on the basis heretofore arranged for general business. In the matter of New Orleans business, the Pacific Express being an adjunct of Gould's system, had it their own way over the Texas and New Orleans Railway. The war of rates during the past winter has broken into the receipts of the company very materially.